

Affective Barriers to the Political Use of Social Media

In this paper I would like to make a preliminary sketch of the affective economies of social media and how this configuration hinders the political potential of the medium. I will be using the broad term “social media” as short hand for specific platforms, namely Twitter and Facebook, but also for platforms that have a similar level of community interaction and self-disclosure. Social media generates various affective economies in which users find legibility through different affective registers. If legibility is contingent upon messages resonating at a certain frequency, then dissent is incompatible with the medium, since deviations will not resonate at the frequency necessary for legibility. Feeling revolutionary requires a certain distance from an established norm. It is a position articulated as opposition to x , where x is a common point of contention, like gun control, fracking, or capital punishment. Avoiding this, or feeling revolutionary differently, could utilize processes of speech which attempt to short-circuit the process of self-subordination, for instance, leaderless resistances or those who refuse to enumerate demands. While the efficacy of these alternatives is debatable, the potential they hold cannot be achieved via social media because of the way user communities discipline themselves.